

# ELSAH HISTORY

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Mississippi River, photograph by Danne Rhaesa, used with permission

## Living Along the Great Mississippi River

By Jane Pfeifer, guest editor

In 1852, James Semple purchased a portion of land from James Mason to develop Jersey Landing/Elsah. During the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Mississippi River was the major commercial means of transport. In the *Daily Alton Telegraph*, February 18, 1854, an advertisement about the acquired property and its development prospects lauds Elsah's access to the Mississippi River.

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*The Landing is open to any on the river, for several miles along the shore the water is deep enough for large-class vessels to receive and discharge their cargoes without difficulty.<sup>i</sup>*

While today we know that Elsah never became that envisioned port for large-class vessels, Elsah was active as a river transportation center during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Various goods were transported and including fish caught locally and shipped. The *History of Jersey and Green County* gives the following description, titled “Elsah Fishery:”

*One of the leading industries of the town of Elsah, and of this whole section of the country, is the fishery of Isaac Haupt. This gentleman commenced the business as early as 1866, in a comparatively small way, and has developed it to an extraordinary dimension. He has some sixty or seventy nets, and two large seines and five fishing boats, which he uses in the business, and finds employment for quite a number of hands. All kinds of edible fish, among which are white, black and calico bass, pike, pickerel, catfish, perch, buffalo and red-horse, are gathered from the bosom of the mighty “father of waters” and prepared for the market. Tons of the finny tribe are gathered in and forwarded to St. Louis and other points, and disposed of to the benefit and profit of the enterprising proprietor of this industry, who is the largest and most successful fishery operator in this county, or, in fact in all this region. He is able, honest, and industrious, and deserves the good fortune brought about by his ability and enterprise.<sup>ii</sup>*

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In the following transcription of a report from the *Jersey County Democrat*, we also get an estimate of the quantity of fish being caught:

*MR. ISAAC HAUPT made a very large*

haul of fish last week, something over 8,000 lbs.<sup>iii</sup>

So, what about living along this river in the last 50 plus years? What has happened? In this newsletter, we have two articles to reflect on Elsah and the river. One article provides a light-hearted retrospective of a child's life in Elsah in the 1950s and 1960s. The other provides a scientific explanation of the changes in the river at our doorstep.

The first article, by Mike Cronin, tells some of his river-related memories of life in Elsah before the River Road. Mike Cronin now lives in Port Townsend, Washington and is a Certified Forester and owner of Cronin Forestry. For 34 years, he has worked in managing western Washington forest lands, with emphasis on nonindustrial forest landowner assistance. He has provided forest management plans, timber cruising and appraisals, timber sales, carbon credit sales and forest health assessment for small landowners.

Even though I (your guest editor) did not grow up in Elsah, many parts of Mike's story resonate with me. The Village of Elsah Museum has a fishing pole from Nancy McDow's grandmother; it is 13 feet 2 inches long—a perfect length for fishing from the bank of the Mississippi. The stories I have heard from Mike's contemporaries who live or have lived in Elsah fit wonderfully into his narrative. I am sure you will enjoy reading Mike's childhood adventures as much as I have.

The second article is by Richard Sparks, Ph.D. This article gives a view of the effect of periodic and major floods on the Mississippi River. A number of years ago, I heard a lecture by Dr.

Sparks. At that presentation, he explained the concept of a "pulse river." It was an important concept then and remains relevant today. Having been greatly influenced by this view of the river, I asked Dr. Sparks if he would kindly provide an article for *Elsah History* to help our readers learn about the Mississippi River as a pulse river. He readily agreed to write this article tailored for you, our readers.

Dr. Sparks served for 26 years as Director of Large River Research for the Illinois Natural History Survey at the Illinois River Biological Station in Havana, then as Director of the Illinois Water Resources Center at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign, and finally as a founding member and Senior Aquatic Scientist at the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center in Alton. He played significant roles in several of the events mentioned in his article, including: expert witness for the Sierra Club and Association of Western Railroads in the Lock and Dam 26 Trial; Principal Investigator of the Navigation Effects Studies at Grafton (Upper Mississippi River Commission); Principal Investigator, Large Rivers Long Term Ecological Research (National Science Foundation); Principal Investigator, Strategic Renewal of Large Floodplain Rivers (National Science Foundation); co-author of *The Flood Pulse Concept*; co-author of *Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems: Science, Technology, and Public Policy* (National Research Council).

We hope you will find that both of these articles provide a greater understanding of Elsah, past and present. Historic Elsah Foundation thanks both of these experts for taking time from their professional lives to write them.

<sup>i</sup> Daily Alton Telegraph, February 18, 1854 quoted in Beverly Bauser, *Remembering Elsah*, self-published transcription, Godfrey, IL: 2010, page 1.

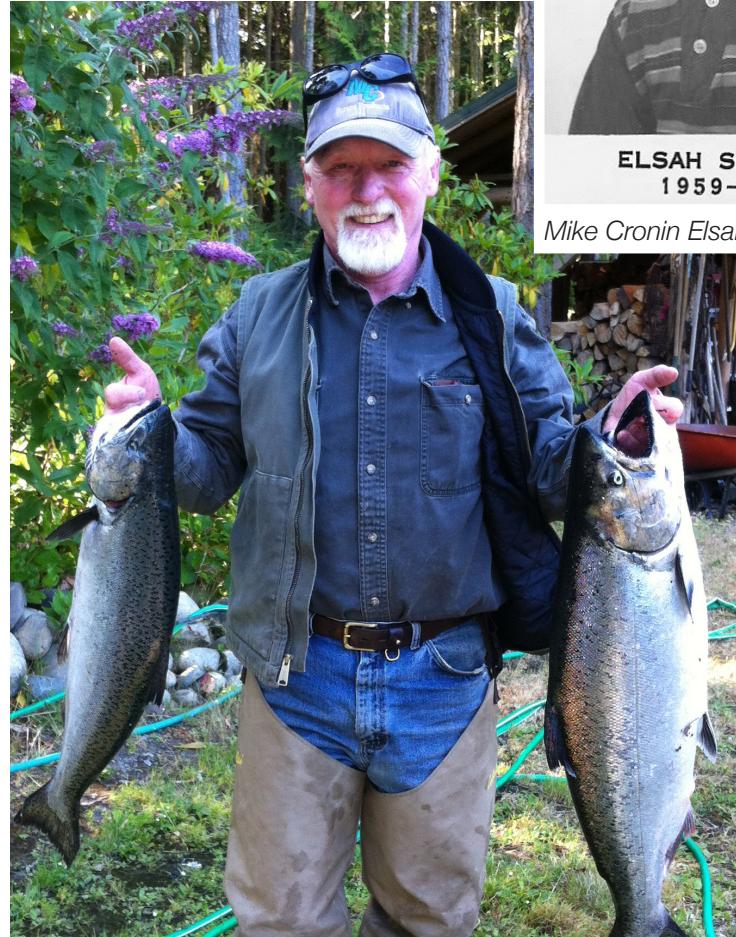
<sup>ii</sup> History of Greene and Jersey Counties, Illinois, Springfield, IL: Continental Historical Co., 1885, pp. 257-274.

<sup>iii</sup> Jersey County Democrat, January 15, 1880, quoted in Beverly Bauser, *Remembering Elsah*, self-published transcription, Godfrey IL: 2010, page 99.

# Elsah Kids in the 50s and 60s

By Mike Cronin

I grew up in Elsah and have many fond memories of homemade adventures. Elsah has not always been as it is now. In the years before the river road was constructed, we were pretty isolated in the village with no tourists and some very poor families. Our dog, Penny, slept in the center of Mill Street all day with little disturbance. Joywood Farm was an orchard we believed was dedicated to our entertainment. And, the river was the constant, forbidden playground. Most of the families had little time or money for entertaining the kids with organized activities, and there were lots of kids to take advantage of this unstructured time. Swimming lessons in Alton at the YWCA were



Mike Cronin with two king salmon in Washington state



Mike Cronin Elsah School photo

meant to keep us alive when the inevitable river adventures went too far. Khoury league baseball and Boy Scouts, coached and lead by volunteer saints, were available for the boys, but most of our time was unplanned and unsupervised. Summer vacations from school were three month lessons in survival. No kid ever mentioned being bored since this would result in plenty of suggestions from parents. All of these suggestions involved painting, weeding, cleaning and similar torture. We learned to entertain ourselves.

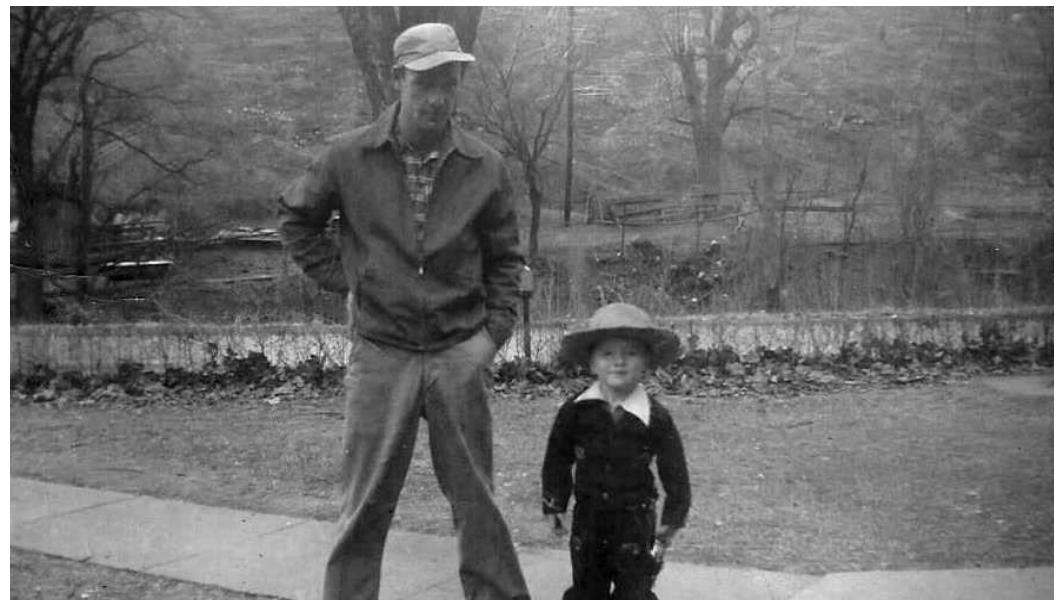
The river was a toxic soup of agricultural and industrial runoff augmented by failed residential sewage systems in those days and only the least discriminating of fish species could tolerate the conditions. This did not reduce the allure to the kids of Elsah. The fact that we were not allowed to swim or otherwise immerse ourselves in the river just made it all the more attractive.

After seeing the Huckleberry Finn movie (1960), all a couple of boys and I could think about in the dog days of summer was building a log raft and floating the river as far as it would take us. The presence of the dam at Alton did not enter into our calculations. If it didn't bother Huck, it wouldn't bother us. Unfortunately, all of the sizable logs we could find along the banks were cottonwood and silver maple, so waterlogged they would barely float on their own. Not easily deterred, we scavenged empty oil cans and all manner of flotation debris from the plentiful supply littering the river bank. We spent days cobbling all

this material together, and kept it secret until the time of our planned launch. With home-made paddles and rear rudder, we believed this craft would carry three boys as far as they dared. Outfitted with all necessary supplies we pushed the raft off and jumped aboard. It was a bit tippy and floated a few inches below the surface, but this was a minor inconvenience in the grand scheme. Steering was inconsistent, but we were afloat and headed out into the current. Pleasure boats were rare in those days and barge traffic was not what it is now, but it was a hazard we discussed at length. Out in the channel and moving along at a good clip, the inevitable barge appeared to be bearing down on us with surprising speed. The choice was to try and cut across in front of the barge or to turn back toward the Elsah side. Being sailors of wisdom, we chose the latter course and paddled like mad back to our side of the river. Beaching the raft in the riprap, we were surprised to see how far downriver we had drifted. Soaking wet, we made the long hike back to Elsah to get home before dark and avoid any complications with parents.

With the long hot summers and time on our hands, the dream of a swimming hole was a regular preoccupation. By the time the hot weather arrived, Mill Creek was usually pretty dry. So, we figured a reservoir would be a good idea. Building a dam across the creek seemed like a good idea at the time and we just assumed that the neighbors wouldn't mind if the "happy hatchets" sacrificed a few of the creekside trees for the dam. These dams

worked fairly well and backed up a little water until the big rains and resultant high water blew them out. They were just not reliable enough so it was only when the big floods came in warm months that the village pool was officially open. There was a pond in the low spot near the river between Mill and LaSalle Streets where we gigged frogs in the spring and caught turtles for pets. In summer, it was a little stagnant even for us but when merged with flood waters it became a large open water expanse. Since this was not officially in the river, we considered it perfect for swimming.



Mike Cronin and dad, Bob Cronin

There were a couple of dedicated sports (food) fishermen in Elsah at the time; and we held them in high regard since they consistently caught fish. Unlike us kids, these men had the patience to sit for hours watching their poles instead of throwing rocks at each other and into the river to pass the time. My uncle Jesse Farmer was a regular on the bank in front of Elsah. His gear was primitive by today's standards, but the fish did not seem to care. The first trick was to use enough weight to cast it out a long way and to hold onto the bottom without the rig floating back in downstream. Used spark plugs were plentiful and the price

was right so they were regularly used with several being needed in periods of high flow. A couple feet of light leader no larger than about an eighth inch diameter tied to the heavier mainline just above the spark plugs held the treble hook(s). Bait was usually worms, but dough balls, chicken livers and other animal parts worked pretty well. Two or three species of catfish, perch (which I think were drum) and carp were the preferred catch, with alligator gar and eel the least favored. Jesse usually caught more than he and his family could eat so he would drop off the surplus at the Cronin house on the way home. I'd like to say we



Cronin's Dodge station wagon



Mike Cronin with sister, Rose

learned patience from Jesse, but it would be a lie.

The opening of the river road in the early 60s made Elsah much more accessible and marked the beginning of tourism in the village. During the long construction phase, the newly paved section of the river road in front of Elsah provided great opportunity for unsanctioned activities. I remember the Darr boys had a propeller driven model race car which used a miniature alcohol fueled engine that you started by priming then spinning the prop with your fingers. What could go wrong? Watching the thing roar around in a tight circle, tethered to a string got boring and now we had miles of new smooth, flat pavement not yet open to traffic. When we turned it loose pointed upriver on our personal racetrack, we were amazed at the speed and distance it covered before the spectacular crash. When a big snow storm dumped several inches of snow on Elsah a few months before the opening of the river road, Dad ignored Mom's protests and took advantage of the "safe place with no traffic" to drive the station wagon around the barricades and line up every free range kid in town behind the chained up old Dodge. With a train of six or more steel runner sleds (PF fliers and Yankee Clippers) linked together by placing the toes of the first rider into the front of the sled behind, we were off on a run.

The limiting factor was the strength of the lead kid's arms, since he had to hold onto the bumper and pull the weight of the entire train. We used the big boys for this position. The most fun was had by the kids at the end of the train, since they were whipped around by the sawing motion of the feet in the preceding sled. Dad was a hero that night, since only minor injuries were sustained.

# Controversy and Science at the Meeting of Great Rivers

By J. Richard Sparks, Ph.D.

Elsah sits on a 33-mile National Scenic Byway known as the Meeting of Great Rivers—a place intended for contemplation of the beautiful landscape where the Illinois and Missouri rivers join the mighty Mississippi—but where commerce and conservation clashed over the future of the rivers and science improved both the understanding and the management of the rivers.

Drive just a few miles downstream from Elsah on the Great River Road, cross the river under the twin towers and graceful cable-web of the Clark Bridge and look to the right at the Missouri shore. You'll see one gate left as an historic marker from old Lock and Dam 26 that was opened in 1938 and demolished in 1990. If you look downstream 2 miles to the left, you'll see the replacement: new Lock and Dam 26 (also known as the Melvin Price Lock and Dam ), which began operation late in 1989. The plans to replace Lock and Dam 26 renewed heated national debates about engineering rivers that played out in Congress and the courts and were followed by decisions that affect the river today.

## The Lock & Dam 26 Trial and the Congressional Compromise of 1978

It was the Alton Chapter of the Sierra Club that pulled the national organization into the fray over replacing the lock and dam. The Sierra Club joined the Izaak Walton League and the Association of Western Railroads to challenge the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' replacement plans in federal court in Wash-

ington, DC. Agricultural and business interests that shipped on the river had long supported lengthening the locks to accommodate the 1200-ft tows that had come into common use. The existing locks were only 600 ft long, so the tows had to be separated into two units to pass through each lock, then reassembled to continue their journey—an inefficient, time-consuming process. The Corps' plans called for duplicate 1200-ft locks at Alton.



Fig 1 Field station with tow in background

The court case was a test of the recently-enacted National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which required all federal agencies to report any significant environmental impacts that would result from their actions. Congress had already appropriated \$22 million for construction of the new locks and dam in August of 1974, but in the same month the plaintiffs sought an injunction against the project on the grounds that the Corps had not adequately addressed the system-wide environmental damage the project would cause as a result

of the expected large increase in commercial traffic. The Railroad Association also argued that disproportionate federal subsidies of waterways and interstate highways, while federal regulations prohibited railways from dropping unprofitable branch lines, constituted an unfair competitive advantage. District Court Judge Charles Richey agreed with the plaintiffs that the Corps had failed to comply with NEPA and issued an injunction against continuing work on the project until the Corps produced a more comprehensive environmental impact statement. Judge Richey also agreed that the proposed lock and dam was not just a maintenance project, but was clearly the first step in a plan for a new, deeper navigation system that required Congressional authorization.

The national controversy over the future of the river continued for the next four years. Congress finally reached a compromise in 1978 in legislation that approved construction of one 1,200-ft lock (which would only marginally increase navigation capacity) while also establishing a Commission to develop a comprehensive management plan for the river that included navigation, maintenance of fish and wildlife, and other beneficial uses.

### **Navigation Impacts Documented by the Illinois Surveys at Principia College's Field Station, 1978-1981**

The Commission contracted for many studies, including several environmental studies that were done by the Illinois Geological, Water, and Natural History Surveys from a house along the Illinois River just upstream of Grafton. The flood-damaged house had been bought out with funds from the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration following the Mississippi River flood of 1973, and then turned over to Principia College to operate as a field station for river ecology and geology

courses. The Survey scientists hired student interns, graduate students, and locals with river experience to assist in assessing the status of the Illinois River and Mississippi River and to measure impacts of commercial and recreational boats on water quality and aquatic life. By the time the Commission delivered its plan to Congress and the Commission itself was terminated in 1981, the scientists had found that many aquatic species did utilize the main channel where they might be displaced or injured by boat traffic, although the ultimate effects on populations could not be assessed in the limited time allowed for the studies. Boat traffic did cause resuspension of sand and silt on the bottoms of the rivers and wave wash that eroded shorelines and islands and contributed to filling of side channel and back-water habitats with sediment. The effects were particularly noticeable on the Illinois River because 60% of the commercial traffic moving upstream of Alton went up the Illinois River, which was smaller than the Mississippi and had more easily-suspended silt than the Mississippi.

### **Great Rivers Join the Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) Network, 1981-1987**

In 1981, the scientists who had documented the potential impacts of increased navigation on the rivers, turned around to argue that the rivers were sufficiently "natural" to warrant inclusion in a network of sites representing the major ecosystems of the United States. They were successful in listing several portions of both rivers as Experimental Ecological Reserves, a designation that provided no funding but indicated that ecological research was on-going and cooperative projects with other institutions were welcome. Next, they applied to include their sites in the Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) network, which was funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF).

LTER was designed to follow ecosystems through time to answer questions that could not be answered by typical 1-5-year research grants—questions such as how ecosystems maintained themselves and recovered from floods, droughts, hurricanes, and other disturbances. To gain funding and admission to the network, the river scientists had to overcome perceptions on the part of some reviewers and NSF program officers that the large rivers were polluted, engineered waterways of little interest to ecologists.

It seemed like a difficult argument to make, but the Illinois Surveys had scientific information, particularly about the Illinois River, that predated major man-made alterations. Starting in the 1880s, the founding Director of the Illinois Natural History Survey, Stephen Forbes, had launched a systematic investigation of the Illinois River to find out why it supported so many species, hosted phenomenal numbers of migratory birds, and yielded more fish per mile than lakes and other rivers.

Unfortunately, the early research had barely started when the City of Chicago made a fateful decision to reverse the flow of the Chicago River and direct it into the Illinois River instead of Lake Michigan, which was the source of the city's drinking water. By 1900 the Chicago River had been modified to convey sewage and raw wastes from the stockyards, meat-packing plants, and other industries downstream and away from Lake Michigan. The foul water created a fishless, hypoxic zone in the river that expanded farther downstream every year and eventually into the Illinois River. Chicago solved its public health problem at the expense of the Illinois River and downstream communities, despite lawsuits from cities as far downstream as St. Louis. The Natural History Survey was forced to shift the focus of its research to "unnatural history"—document-

ing the impacts of the Chicago wastes. Similar impacts also occurred downstream of cities on the Mississippi River, including St. Louis.

Fortunately, that was not the end of the story. The century-old data provided some early indications as to why the Illinois River was so productive. The commercial fishermen already knew that they could catch enormous numbers of fish at certain times of the year in the floodplains and backwaters of the rivers. The scientists had begun to work out what the fish were feeding on and where that food was produced. They found that the floodplains were serving as spawning, nursery, and feeding areas during spring floods.

The historic data were also used by the contemporary scientists as a reference point to document the recovery of the river. The Clean Water Act of 1972 required cities and industries to treat their wastes, and provided federal funds to assist municipalities in upgrading their treatment plants. On both the Illinois and Upper Mississippi River, water quality subsequently improved and native fishes returned to reaches of the rivers downstream of cities.

In their proposal to the National Science Foundation, the scientists also pointed out that approximately half of the original floodplain upstream of Alton remained unleveed and open to seasonal floods, in contrast to the floodplains downstream of Alton and in most of the developed countries of the world. Even farther upstream on the Mississippi, in Wisconsin and Minnesota, virtually the entire floodplain was preserved in the Upper Mississippi Fish and Wildlife Refuge. The scientists overcame the perception that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had transformed the free-flowing Illinois and Upper Mississippi rivers into a series of stagnant pools behind dams by pointing out the important differences between low navigation dams and high dams

built for flood storage, water supply, and power generation. Anyone who has experienced the current in the Mississippi River near Elsah by swimming or boating knows that it certainly is not “stagnant”, even during low flows. With the exception of Dam 19 at Keokuk, Iowa, which was built to generate electric power, the primary purpose of the six dams on the Illinois River and the 29 on the Upper Mississippi River is to maintain water depths for navigation during low flow periods (typically in the summer and fall). During spring floods, the gates are completely out of the water and the rivers are free-flowing. During less frequent, larger floods, most of the dams, which are more like low earthen and rock weirs, are overtopped, and the gate structures look like islands in a vast flood. Since many fishes migrate to their spawning areas during the spring floods (paddlefish, for example) (Fig 2 Paddlefish), they can migrate through most of the open dams (again, Dam 19 is the exception and some of the dams may impede species that cannot lock through with boats or negotiate high current velocities through the gates). The wicket dams on the Illinois River at La Grange and Peoria fold into the bottom of the river during floods, so both boats and fish can pass right over them. The presence of the American eel in the rivers also testifies to the relative openness of the navigation dams compared to storage



Fig 2 Paddlefish

dams. The eels are the long-distance migratory champions in the rivers—the eels are born in the Atlantic Ocean and the females migrate to the mouth of the Mississippi and then upstream, where they grow for several years before returning to the sea to spawn and die. (Fig 3 American eel)

The scientists argued that large rivers and their floodplains constituted an important class of the nation’s ecosystems. Furthermore, they made a case that the confluence of three large rivers in the vicinity of Elsah was a good place to undertake comparative studies. They finally convinced the reviewers and program officers at the National Science Foundation, and the Large River LTER site was funded in 1982, joining sites that included forests, streams, lakes, grasslands, deserts, and a coastal wetland. Once again, the house on the Illinois River near Grafton was occupied by scientists, technicians and students from the Illinois Surveys, colleges, and universities, this time with a sizable contingent from Western Illinois University, which also maintained its own field station on the Mississippi River at Warsaw, Illinois.

It might seem unlikely that such a disparate collection of sites as contained in the LTER network would have anything in common, but some big ideas began to emerge by comparing



Fig 3 American eel

data across sites. An old idea that nature always tended toward stability proved too simple, as was the idea that fires and other disturbances should be prevented because they upset the balance of nature and natural stability. The evidence from the LTER network was that some ecosystems were actually maintained by disturbances—examples included fires in the prairies and in some forests and floods in the big rivers. By nature, these were *pulsing* systems, not following the classical ecological concept of succession through intermediate stages to a final, stable climax condition. If the disturbances were stopped, these ecosystems changed, losing species and becoming less productive. Without fire, prairies changed to forests. Without seasonal floods, floodplains became dominated by a few types of trees and biodiversity declined. On the other hand, if disturbances were too frequent or too intense, biodiversity and productivity also declined. Examples included unnaturally frequent little floods on the Illinois River during the summer growing season which drowned the vegetation that normally colonized mud flats left behind after the naturally-occurring spring flood. The unnatural floods were caused by releases of water from the Chicago waterways, dam operations, and the loss of natural water storage capacity in the developed watersheds and floodplains. Like the children's story of Goldilocks and the Three Bears and the porridge that was neither too hot nor too cold, there were natural disturbances that were just right—neither too frequent and intense, nor too infrequent or too mild. Both the historic data and occasional recent years when water levels approximated the natural pattern and the flood-adapted plants and animals rebounded demonstrated the importance of natural variation, from flood to low flow, in maintaining what scientists were now calling the floodplain-river ecosystem. The scientists also coined the term “floodpulse”, making an

analogy to the importance of the pulsing of the heart in maintaining a healthy body.

All LTER sites undergo review every five years to determine whether they should receive funding for another five years. Although the relatively young researchers on the Large River LTER were well-published in their own disciplines of aquatic chemistry, freshwater ecology, water quality, river geology, fisheries, and hydraulic modeling, they did not have established publication records in ecosystem science (the focus of the LTER) so they were not well known to the reviewers. Their publication rate peaked *after* the fifth year, partly due to the lead time required to start up research on large rivers. Whereas one professor and a few students could do publishable research on a small stream using nets and other comparatively inexpensive equipment, conducting research safely on large rivers required equipment and training on a larger and more costly scale. In fact, the scale of the project was a liability in the eyes of some reviewers—how could funding intended for experiments on small plots in prairies and forests be sufficient to work along miles of rivers and floodplains? The old prejudice against attempting basic research on altered ecosystems also reasserted itself. The project officially terminated in 1987, although some funds were provided through 1989 to bring the project to an orderly close and enable staff to find other jobs.

### The Flood Pulse Concept, 1989

The funding provided by the National Science Foundation enabled the Illinois researchers to share their findings at meetings with the small cadre of ecologists working on large rivers around the world, including relatively undeveloped rivers in Canada, South America, Africa, and India. At one such meeting in 1986, in Ontario, Canada, three scientists became in-

creasingly dissatisfied with the prevailing conceptions about large rivers in the formal papers presented during the day. The three included the author of this article and two scientists who worked on the Amazon River—one from the United Kingdom and one from Germany. They spent their evenings drafting a paper that presented an alternative view, based on their data from the Amazon, Mississippi, and Illinois rivers. The prevailing view was that the productivity of large rivers, including fisheries, depended upon the downstream flow of food produced upstream, specifically in the tributaries. The only exception was the salmon runs, where the adult fish found their food and grew in the sea before returning to rivers to spawn. Even in the case of the salmon, the young were consuming food from upstream sources before entering the sea.

The three contrarians reviewed the largely-forgotten pioneering studies by Forbes and his colleagues on the Illinois River and by the Romanian, Grigore Antipa, on the Danube River. Then they added contemporary results from their own and other studies to demonstrate that floodplains produced food in abundance that was accessed by fishes during floods. *The Flood Pulse Concept* was finally published in 1989, too late to demonstrate to NSF reviewers that the Large River LTER was making a significant contribution to ecosystem science.

### **The Upper Mississippi River Management Act of 1986—A Nationally Significant Ecosystem and a Nationally Significant Waterway, 1986 to the Present**

Although funding for basic research on the rivers ended, many of the recommendations in the 1981 Comprehensive Master Plan for restoring and monitoring the rivers were implemented by Congress in the landmark Upper

Mississippi River Management Act of 1986. The Act was a compromise that recognized the Upper Mississippi River System (UMRS, which includes the Illinois River) as both a “nationally significant ecosystem and a nationally significant commercial navigation system.” It authorized construction of a second lock at Alton, but limited the length to 600 ft, which would not increase the traffic capacity as much as a second 1200-ft lock. The Act also recognized that increased traffic could degrade the natural resources of the river, so it authorized the first large river restoration and monitoring program in the nation, the Environmental Management Program. The Program had two components: (1) the Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Program, which was expected to mitigate damage to fish and wildlife habitat caused by the navigation system itself, navigation traffic, or other human impacts, and (2) the Long Term Resource Monitoring Program, which would measure the health of the river and detect trends, good or bad.

It was ironic that the habitat restoration projects subsequently undertaken by the Environmental Management Program constituted the largescale experiments that the LTER reviewers thought could not be done. The projects were experiments in the sense that desired outcomes (such as growth of aquatic vegetation) resulting from actions such as building low levees to control water levels and islands to reduce waves were not entirely certain and needed to be monitored and assessed. Without monitoring the results, the reasons for success or failure could not be determined and used to improve restoration. The monitoring data could also be used to advance basic scientific understanding of the workings of the floodplain-river ecosystems.

Six river reaches were chosen for long term monitoring, one in each of the five states along

the Upper Mississippi River, with the exception of Illinois, which has two: one on the middle Illinois River near Havana and another that includes the lower Illinois River and the reach of the Mississippi River from Dam 26 upstream to Dam 25. The Corps of Engineers refers to the latter reach, including the lower Illinois River, as Pool 26. The Pool 26 Long Term Monitoring Program started collecting data in 1986, just as the old Large River LTER was phasing out.

Once again, scientists, technicians, and students were sampling and assessing the rivers in the vicinity of Elsah. (Fig 4 Winter Sampling) At first they worked out of an old duck club-house on Cuivre Island, St. Charles County, Missouri, until that flooded out. Then the Corps of Engineers provided space across from Alton at the Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area. Those buildings had to be evacuated during the Great Midwestern Flood of 1993. After a succession of rentals on high ground in Alton and Brighton—a former

car dealership, a house, and a pole barn with attached office space—the program finally moved into the Jerry F. Costello Confluence Field Station on land provided by the Corps of Engineers next to Lock and Dam 26 and the National Great Rivers Museum (Figure 1). The station was dedicated in 2010 and was the first facility occupied by the Pool 26 Long Term Resource Monitoring Program that had actually been designed for river research, as well as other programs, including education. The station is operated by the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center, a cooperative venture of Lewis and Clark Community College and several units of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, including the Illinois Natural History Survey, which over a century earlier had pioneered scientific studies on large floodplain-rivers that helped define and develop the then-new discipline of ecology. It has been a fascinating and contentious century, documented not only in newspapers and Congressional and court records regarding engineering the rivers, but also in the LTRMP reports and scientific papers about the plants, fish and wildlife of the rivers, described next.



Fig 4 Winter sampling

## Ancient Fishes

The great rivers have representatives of ancient lineages of fishes that saw both the dinosaurs and the glaciers come and go, including the bizarre-looking paddlefish. There were two living species of paddlefishes, located half a world apart: one in the Mississippi and one in the Yangtze River in China. Unfortunately, the high dams on the Yangtze blocked migrations of the Chinese paddlefish, and neither adults nor young have been seen in the wild since 2003. The contrast between the fates of these two ancient species is a testament to the great difference in impact on fish migration between high dams for water storage and low navigation dams. It is also a testament to the conser-



Fig 5 Lake sturgeon

vation and environmental movements which started earlier in the U.S. than in China—apparently too late to save the Chinese paddlefish (Fig 2 Paddlefish).

We cannot yet recover species like the Chinese paddlefish that have probably gone extinct recently, let alone create a *Jurassic Park* (the title of the fictional book and film about dinosaurs recreated from fossil DNA). You could, however, stock a “*Jurassic Aquarium*” with living paddlefish, sturgeon (Fig 5 Lake sturgeon), bowfin, and gars from the Mississippi River that would be virtually indistinguishable from what you would see if you could travel back 40 to 150 million years to ancient rivers in a submarine time machine!

These ancient species survived in the Mississippi River when the continental glaciers moved southward and filled the basins of the Great Lakes and northern rivers with ice. Fortunately, the species that lived in those basins were able to follow the Mississippi River southward. When the glaciers retreated northward the species recolonized the reestablished drainages. In contrast to the Mississippi, the great rivers of western Europe flowed east-west, or north in the case of northern Russia, and many species were eliminated during the ice ages. So the Mississippi River has been the great conservator of species through geologic time.



Fig 6 Blue catfish

The same may not be true in response to much more rapid human-induced changes, including climate change.

### Climate Change

It turns out that the Mississippi River in the vicinity of Elsah was an approximate northern boundary for several southern species that now appear to be expanding upriver. The blue catfish (Fig 6 Blue catfish), regarded as a southern species, has increased dramatically in Pool 26 since 2000, probably in response to a documented increase in water temperature. The blue catfish is retracing a route that was undertaken by hundreds of species of fishes following each of the glaciations of North America. The presence of their young indicates that blue catfish are spawning locally, not just migrating through. Several large adults have been caught locally, including one caught by an angler just below Dam 26 in 2004, which weighed 124 pounds and was nearly five feet long.

Although warming will expand the ranges of the blue catfish and other southern species, cool-water species such as walleye, northern pike, and smallmouth bass cannot retreat northward indefinitely, because the Mississippi has a northern boundary and because the Arctic is warming much faster than the rest of North America. These cool-and-cold-water

species will not evolve their way out of this problem because the current warming episode is proceeding much more rapidly than the pace of natural selection.

## Invasive Fishes

The commercial fishermen were often the first to note the arrival of several species of Asian carps (common, silver, bighead, grass, black, and goldfish, which is in the carp family), partly because they have more nets in the water more often than do the scientists. The commercial catch of Asian bighead and silver carps in Pool 26 exploded from just a few hundred pounds per year in the 1980s to over 70,000 lbs in 2003 and over 260,000 pounds in 2009 (Fig 7 Two people pulling in net with three large bighead carp). Four of these species (silver, bighead, grass, and black) are highly regarded food fish in China, where the Chinese term for them translates as “the four famous domestic fishes”. Ironically, they are in severe decline in China, again because of dams and other alterations. Despite efforts to market them in the U.S., they have yet to become popular here. Another advantage as a food fish is that both bighead and silver carp feed on plankton, the base of the food chain, in contrast to several of the native sport fishes which feed on other fish and can potentially accumulate pesticides, mercury, or lead that pose human health hazards.

By feeding at the base of the food chain the bighead and silver carps may compete with virtually all the young of native fishes, which start their lives as zooplankton feeders before graduating to other, larger food items. They may also compete with native species that consume plankton as adults (paddlefish, gizzard shad, bigmouth buffalo, and others). The LTRMP alone cannot answer questions about food competition and other impacts of invasive

species, but the data provide a context and the program provides facilities, equipment, and personnel that can be engaged in special studies that can address these questions.

The bighead and silver carps are not the first to invade the local rivers. In the 1880s the US Bureau of Fisheries and state fishery agencies deliberately introduced the common carp in Midwestern rivers. There was a market for these fish among eastern European immigrants who wanted the fish they were familiar with in



Fig 7 Three bighead carp

the old country (the common carp had been introduced to Europe centuries earlier from China). The common carp came to dominate the inland commercial fisheries in the Midwest, and special railcars of live carp were delivered to cities as far away as New York. Within a few decades, tastes changed, market

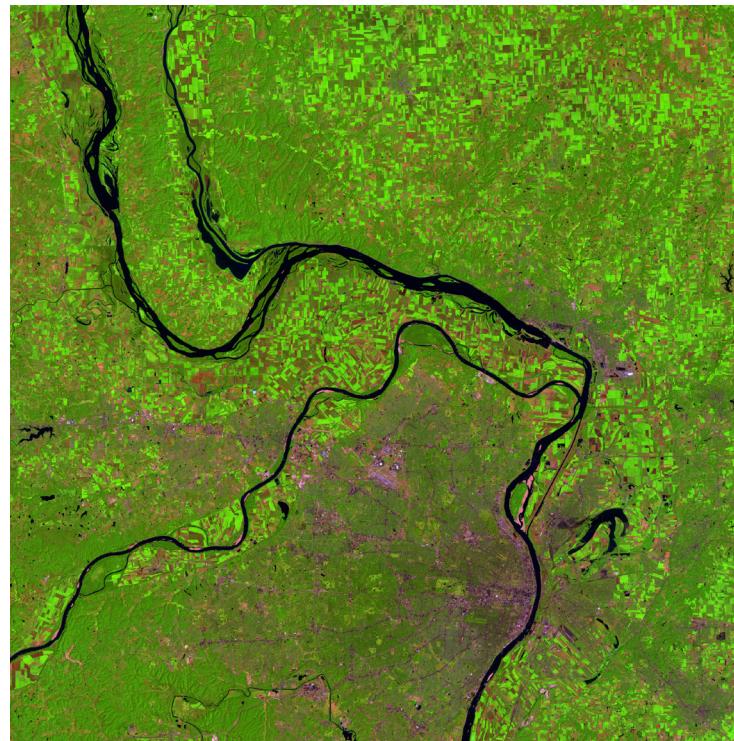
prices declined, and undesirable habits of common carp became noticeable, including their habit of rooting in the bottom sediments for food, thereby uprooting aquatic vegetation and increasing the turbidity of the water. Common carp are still an important part of the catch by the 8 to 10 commercial fishermen who work Pool 26, but the catch declined from a peak of 90,000 lbs in 1996 to 9,000 lbs in 2003. The drop in the commercial catch of common carp has been more than made up by the increasing catch of bighead and silver carp, even though the market price for the latter species is very low in this region. On several occasions during the past five years, the commercial fishery biologist for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources has observed a crew from Beardstown, Illinois fill a semi-trailer truck with 40,000 pounds of mostly bighead and silver carp. The fish were caught in Pool 26 in the winter in less than two days, using gill and trammel nets deployed from two boats. The downward trend in the commercial catch of the common carp was also noted in the LTRMP data from 1994 to 2003, possibly because an exceptional number of common carp were produced during the Great Flood of 1993, discussed next. The adult fish had access to a greatly-expanded floodplain in 1993 and the small fish they produced subsequently grew to a size where they could be caught by both commercial fishermen and scientists. After 1993, not as many common carp were produced.

### The Great Midwest Flood of 1993

At the time the flood occurred, it was one of the nation's costliest weather-related disasters, with 48 deaths and \$34 billion (in 2015 dollars) in damages, flood-fighting costs, and revenue losses. The Meeting of the Rivers became the meeting of floods, as crests coming down the Upper Mississippi and the Missouri rivers merged to produce the highest stages recorded

on many river gages, including the ones at St. Louis and Grafton. The rivers reclaimed much of their floodplains, overtopping or breaching more than 1,000 levees, and the LTRMP scientists seized the opportunity to document the effects on fish, vegetation and water quality.

The flood crested four times in the vicinity of Elsah and lasted from Spring into the Fall, so it overlapped the preferred spawning seasons of virtually all the fishes that spawn on floodplains. In fish and wildlife areas such as Swan Lake, Gilbert Lake, and Stump Lake, the flood



August 14, 1993

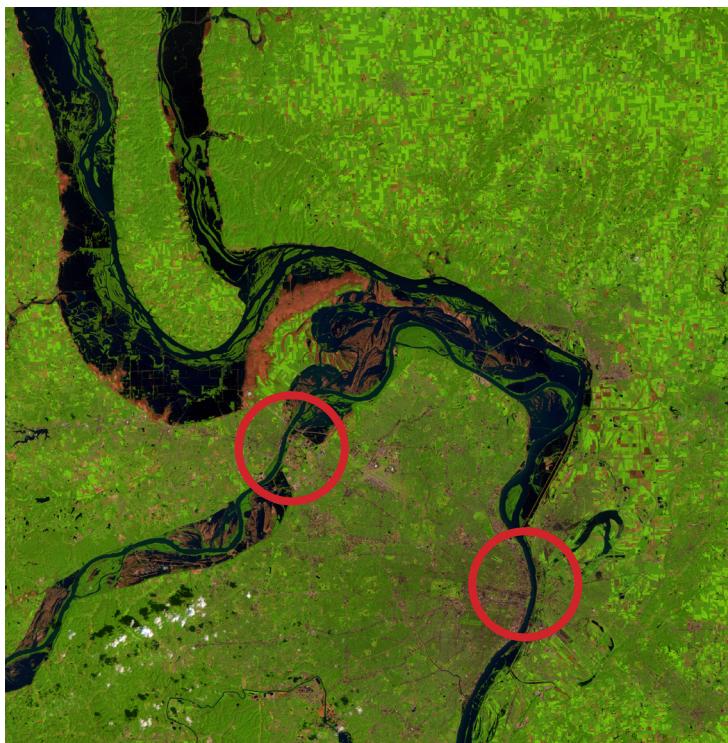
allowed black crappies and other nest-building species to find firm, freshly-flooded soils, outside the permanent lake basins where soft sediments had accumulated. In the newly-flooded shallows, there was an abundance of chlorophyll in the water, indicating that plankton were available for young fish. It was difficult to sample for fish during the flood because the river was closed to all boat traffic and because the fish were widely dispersed into a huge volume of water. Even so, the presence

of young fish indicated that successful spawns were occurring, including grass pickerel, which had rarely been caught before. By the following year, when the fish could be sampled under more typical conditions, it was evident that largemouth bass, black crappie, white bass, and common carp had produced large numbers of young during the flood.

In addition to local, short-term effects that showed up within a year of the flood, there were some longer-lasting effects. The duration and depth of the 1993 flood exceeded the

tolerances of even some flood-adapted trees. By the fall of 1993 many mature trees had brown, drying leaves, even though they were standing in water—as though a drought, rather than a flood were occurring! The oxygen had been used up in the flooded soils and the roots had died. In the years that followed, many cavity-nesting birds used the standing dead trees, including Carolina wrens, owls, prothonotary warblers, tree swallows, and wood ducks.

In the long term, infrequent disturbances like the 1993 flood play what at first seems a paradoxical role in maintaining the species diversity of floodplains. By killing back some species, the floods allow other species to thrive in areas where they had been eliminated through competition for light or other resources, as can be seen in the case of cottonwoods. Cottonwoods can shade out other plants that grow on mud flats left after typical spring floods (the floodpulses) and that provide food for wildlife, such as the threatened decurrent false aster. Normally, the floodpulses are sufficient to drown out the encroaching cottonwood seedlings year after year, but if no floods occur for several years, the cottonwoods grow tall enough that the typical floodpulses cannot completely submerge and drown them. The cottonwood forest expands from the higher, less-frequently flooded zones of the floodplain at the expense of the short-statured, short-lived plants that usually grow in the more frequently flooded, lower zones. The cottonwoods grow taller and more flood-resistant every year, until a great flood, such as the 1993 flood, persists long enough to kill the roots of the adult trees. Great floods reset the plant communities of the floodplain to a condition where floodpulses can again maintain the decurrent false aster and the other plants that thrive on mudflats. Floods can be thought of as cycles within cycles: there are



August 19, 1993

Shown above are satellite images of the Upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Missouri rivers. The three rivers occupied most of their floodplains during the flood of 1993, except where the levees held at Earth City, MO, and on both sides of the Mississippi River at St. Louis and East St. Louis.

NASA images created by Jesse Allen, Earth Observatory

the annual floodpulses within the longer cycle of occasional great floods. Both play important roles in maintaining the floodplain-river ecosystem.

The Great Flood had long-distance effects as well, reaching all the way to the Gulf of Mexico and even beyond. If more of the floodplains along the Mississippi and in the Delta had been allowed to flood, more nutrients that had washed out of the Upper Mississippi Basin would have been retained and fewer injected directly into the Gulf, where nutrient concentrations five to ten times higher than in previous years caused a large increase in phytoplankton near the water's surface. Then the phytoplankton eventually died and sank and the oxygen demand from decomposition contributed to a doubling of the extent of the hypoxic water on the bottom of the Gulf, which threatened valuable fishes and shellfish. The freshwater from the flood created a low salinity mass of water that was subsequently tracked across the Gulf of Mexico and through the Straits of Florida. It was entrained in the Gulf Stream and was still discernible as far north as North Carolina in September.

## After the Flood

It was fortuitous that the year before the flood the National Research Council had published a 500-page report directed to policy makers and titled: *Restoration of Aquatic Ecosystems: Science, Technology, and Public Policy*. The section on objectives of river restoration stated: "... there are substantial segments of the Illinois River, Atchafalaya River, and Upper Mississippi River included in public lands ... that do retain floodplains and a floodpulse. The objectives are to add to the existing floodplain-river segments and to restore or rehabilitate degraded segments." This report was cited in supporting documents for the 1994 review of the nation's

floodplain management policy, commissioned by the Clinton administration: *Sharing the Challenge: Floodplain Management into the 21st Century*. The review committee was chaired by Brigadier General Gerald Galloway, and the report subsequently became known as "The Galloway Report". The report noted the congruence of two public objectives: improvement and recovery of the environmental and recreational values of rivers and their floodplains, and reduction of future flood damages. These two objectives were reflected in several recommendations, including one that environmental objectives should be co-equal with economic development in planning and evaluating navigation, water supply, and flood protection projects. Another recommendation was that nonstructural alternatives to flood protection should be considered, such as wetland and floodplain restoration to reduce flood crests and repetitive flood damage payments, instead of just dams and levees.

One specific recommendation that emerged from the scientists who examined the status of data and flood prediction capabilities (the Scientific Assessment and Strategy Team) was implemented. The scientists recommended that real-time flood predictions should be developed and should be easily accessible to the public on the web. Such a system is now available through the cooperative efforts of the U.S. Geological Survey, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Weather Service. To see current water levels and predictions for the next seven days at Grafton, for example, go to:

<http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=lsx&gage=grfi2>

Or google "advanced hydrologic prediction service" and click on the gaging station nearest you that is shown on the U.S. map.

Although not all the recommendations were

implemented (it may take another great flood and the national attention it brings to accomplish that), the Galloway Report and the 1993 flood are regarded as landmarks in the development of floodplain management policy. The Meeting of the Great Rivers was not only at the center of the Great Flood of 1993, it also could be credited as the birthplace of the Upper Mississippi River Environmental Management Program that resulted from the Lock and Dam 26 compromise of 1986.

### Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

I'm grateful for the pictures and information provided by the staff of the Illinois Natural History Survey and the Pool 26 Long Term

Resource Monitoring Program, under the direction of Dr. John Chick, located at the Jerry F. Costello National Great Rivers Research and Education Center Confluence Field Station; particularly to Eric Gittinger, Ben Lubinski, and Eric Ratcliff. Rob Maher, Commercial Fishery Biologist with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, provided information about the contemporary fisheries on the Illinois and Mississippi rivers. Thanks also to Ruth Sparks, Jane Pfeifer, David Pfeifer, and Joseph Kaposta for suggestions and editing. None of the material in this article should be taken as official positions of any of the institutions mentioned in the text or for which I've worked.

# Historic Elsah Foundation News

### Message from the Editor

At the top of every Historic Elsah Foundation Board agenda, the purposes of our organization, as established in the fall of 1971 in our articles of incorporation, Article 5, are stated: "The purposes for which the corporation is organized are the preservation and enhancement of the historic buildings, houses, architecture and culture of the Village of Elsah, Illinois, the encouragement of historical research on the Village and other nearby the historic areas, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets and periodicals regarding the Village and the establishment of an educational program to inform the general public of the historical and educational values of the Village." We keep this in mind as we continue programs and start new ones.

Our educational program has greatly bene-

fited from our current President, Tim Tomlinson, with his vision and energy in our regular lecture series and the very large endeavor of the "Lincoln replica coffin project." Tim has asked for a leave of absence from being President while he recovers from shingles. He is on the mend, but still needs some time to recover. As a consequence, we are going through reassignments until we have him back at the helm. When I accepted the position of Vice President, I said that I was able to help in a "pinch." I will do so, but we all wish Tim to be back soon.

This spring, HEF elected Jeff Cornelius as a new Board member and as treasurer. Dr. Cornelius is professor of chemistry at Principia College. He received his undergraduate education at Principia College. As a student, he knew both Charles Hosmer and Paul O. Wil-

liams. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. He has experience serving as treasurer and with audits in other organizations.

As you can see from the rest of the news, Elsah is a surprisingly busy place. We thank everyone for their work, love of Elsah and making it a special place to live and work.

## Renewed Story Gathering

On Friday, January 22, 2016, Principia College students, trained in asking questions and with their laptop computers, devoted themselves to an hour and half of story gathering. The resulting publication from this story gathering is complete. Jessica Wingert was leading this project as an intern in the English Department working with Professor Heidi Snow. Wingert is the author of the publication. Historic Elsah Foundation is the publisher.

It is available at: <http://www.lulu.com/shop/search.ep?contributorId=1433270>

As in the past, Historic Elsah Foundation continues to seek digital and hard copy photographs of residents and properties in Elsah and the immediate vicinity. They are accepted at any time. Contact us at [historicelsah@gmail.com](mailto:historicelsah@gmail.com) for information on the quality of digital copy that is most useful to us.

## Liberty Bank Sponsors the Hosmer Williams Lecture Series in 2016

We are grateful for the continued support of Liberty Bank providing support for the Historic Elsah Foundation's Hosmer Williams lecture series. In the words of Tim Tomlinson, HEF President, "the best, the most successful free lecture series in the metropolitan St. Louis/Riverbend area." All the lectures are followed by refreshments at our hospitality table. This

time allows guests to talk with the speaker and one another.

In May, Principia College faculty member Heidi Snow will give a talk on "Wordsworth and the Lake District" on Thursday evening, May 19.

Additional speakers are planned for the summer and fall. In the fall, Principia College faculty member Andrew Martin will give a talk on the Hopewell burial mounds. And Joe Ringhausen will give a talk about historic apples in Jersey County. For the apple lecture, the hospitality table will feature our favorite apple treats as well as fresh Ringhausen apple cider. The details for our summer talk with Chautauqua Historical Society are uncertain, but our website, [historicelsah.org](http://historicelsah.org), will have them as soon as they are available.

## Home for the Holidays 2015 and 2016

Historic Elsah Foundation's 2015 Home for the Holidays House Tour was a tremendous success and a great day for Elsah. Last year's house tour featured twelve of Elsah's historic homes, all beautifully decorated for the season, along with a number of other buildings—Farley's Music Hall, the Elsah Museum, the old School House, the Methodist Church, the Christian Science Church, Green Tree Inn, Maple Leaf Cottage Inn, and Elsah General Store. Guests were also treated to lunch in Farley's by My Just Deserts of Alton, and to freshly baked goodies, coffee and hot chocolate by Peace of Quiche of Grafton, in the old Keller store building, 22 LaSalle. Each guest was given a 16 page tour booklet with a village map, photos, and descriptions of each of the buildings on the tour. With carolers in the streets and a horse-drawn carriage circling the village, all against the backdrop of this unique historic setting, home tour guests had the opportunity to pause for a moment and imagine a simpler

time, a slower pace, and the beauty of our past.

Also, in 2015 we featured Elsah Artworks by Glenn Felch. Historic Elsah Foundation has acted as a gallery selling these works with a portion of the proceeds going to Historic Elsah Foundation. Visitors saw the artwork in the Museum and in one home. This created interest in the collection of artwork and with subsequent visits, four pieces were sold.

Home for the Holidays is an important fundraising event which helps Historic Elsah Foundation advance its important mission of historic preservation and education. With that in mind, we thank our HEF members, as well as our local sponsors, for their donations and support, and we express our gratitude for over 300 guests from all over the region who purchased home tour tickets. A special note of thanks goes to our Elsah homeowners, who graciously opened their houses, and to over 40 volunteers who served.

Hosting house tours is an Elsah tradition which dates back to the 1970's. In the early years, house tours were often held on Mother's Day. Twelve years ago, HEF selected the first Saturday in December each year as the date for Home for the Holidays, and so the tradition continues. Save the date. This year's Home for the Holidays House Tour will be held on Saturday, December 3rd, 2016, from 12:00 to 4:00 pm. Tickets (\$15 in advance or \$18 at the door) will be available to purchase on November 1st.

## Contra Dances

Valerie Young is directing the Contra Dances this year. The Valentine's Day dance on February 13 was a great success. Music was provided by Great River Road House Band (featuring Martha Edwards, Lindell, and Elsah resident, Joe Van Riper); the caller was Jim Thaxter, a special guest from Columbia, MO. Delicious

chocolate treats were especially enjoyed after the vigorous dancing.

In March, the Contra Dance's theme was St. Patrick's Day and Irish Dancing. The caller was Valerie Young. In April, it was a Jane Austen Ball. Period costumes were welcome, but were optional. Live music was by the Fiscal Cliff Hangers; and the caller was Deborah Highland.



Jane Austen Ball April 9, 2016

The second Saturday of the month is Contra Dance night, September through May. If you are local or passing through the Village, this is a must attend event. It is fun for individuals, couples and families. Check the HEF website or go to:

<http://www.elsahevents.com>

A small fee of \$6.00 per person is charged to pay the caller and band members. Historic Elsah Foundation provides Farley's Music Hall for this event without charge. At the dance voluntary donations to Historic Elsah Foundation help reimburse for the cleaning cost.

## Village of Elsah Museum Annual Photography Exhibit

The Village of Elsah Museum is a joint project of the Village of Elsah and Historic Elsah Foundation. The Museum is holding its 17th annual Photography Exhibit from Saturday, April 2, to Sunday, August 7, 2016. The theme is "Right Sized Elsah." The purpose of the exhibit is to celebrate Elsah and promote an



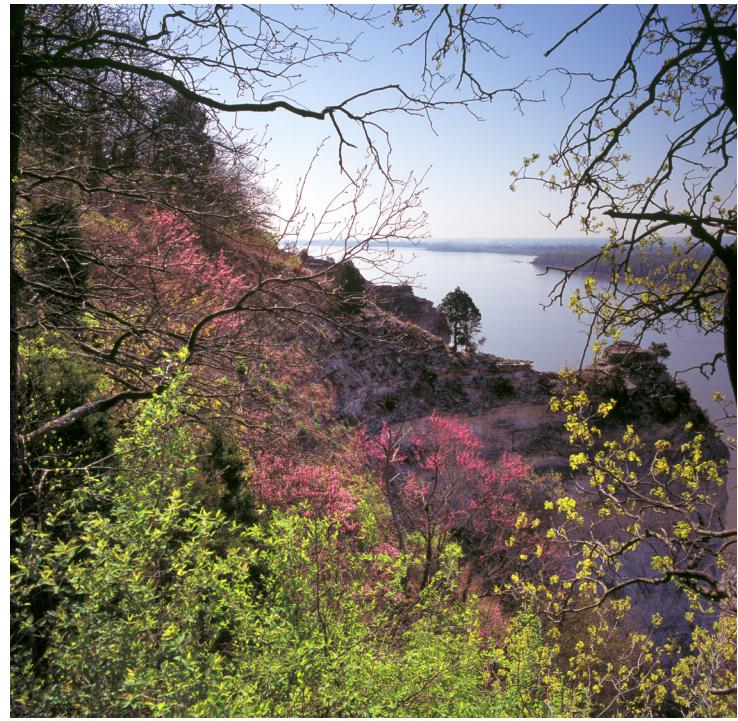
*Remnant Ruin* by Christine Samoore

appreciation of its historic character.

The exhibit is held in the Museum building, Elsah Village Hall, at 26 LaSalle Street, Elsah, Illinois. There was an opening reception on Saturday, April 2, during which the winners are announced. Submissions were due by Monday, March 21, 2016.

There are two purchase prizes, The Village of Elsah purchase prize for an image taken in the valley of the Village of Elsah and the Greatriverroad.com purchase prize for an image taken in the surrounding area. The purchase prize winner for a photograph taken in the valley will receive an overnight stay at The Green Tree Inn.

In order to encourage an appreciation of the beauty of the entire area within and in the immediate area of the corporate limits of the Village, two first-place purchase prizes were offered based on location. The judge was Erica Popp, a working artist and professor at St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley. The Village of Elsah contributed the purchase prize for the photograph of a place in the valley area. Green Tree Inn also rewarded the winner of the Village of Elsah purchase prize with an overnight stay at the Inn. Greatriverroad.com donated the second purchase prize for a photograph taken in the surrounding area.



*Bluff Top View* by Jeffrey Vaughn

Village of Elsah purchase prize was awarded to Christine Samoore of Springfield, Illinois for her work titled, "Remnant Ruin." The work is a digital image, 8 X 12, printed on luster paper of the 1894 Gate Lodge and entrance to the Notch Cliff estate. The composition shows the building and the Mississippi River visually framed from the Ice House Ruins, creating this image within an image view. This is a winter image showing a beautiful, serene view from this unusual vantage point. The print is very good and enhanced by the quality of the presentation with the custom frame and acid free mat.

The Greatriverroad.com purchase prize was awarded to Jeffrey Vaughn of Alton, Illinois. The title of his work is "Bluff Top View." The submission was a print in 100% rag mat in a clear polyester envelope. The image was captured on film with a medium format camera. The 8 X 8 inch image is a digital chromogenic print on Fujifilm Crystal Archive paper, of the bluffs in springtime with a small section of the Mississippi River showing. The high quality image and print in a square format accented the intimate view through the bluff scene to

the River. This view provides a contrast of size with the bluffs and river.

The following donors have made this exhibit possible: Village of Elsah, Greatriverroad.com, Green Tree Inn, donors to the previous Museum Book and Bake Sales, and Burton Art Services.

The Museum Committee is Marjorie Doerr, Connie Davis, Inge Mack, Jane Pfeifer, Mary Anne Schmidt, and Sandra Stack. For more details, go to:

<http://www.elsahevents.com>

## Friends of Eliestoun

Friends of Eliestoun was formed and incorporated as a not-for-profit in 2014 with the mission of saving and preserving Eliestoun. This mansion on the bluffs above Elsah Village, built in the 1889 by Henry S. Turner, Jr. and Ada Ames Turner, granddaughter of the founder of Elsah, James Semple.



Friends of Eliestoun

The Board of Friends of Eliestoun is composed of local residents and two Principia College student representatives, all donating their time. Working in concert with Principia, Friends of Eliestoun hired Metropolitan Build of St. Louis to conduct a feasibility study, to submit to Principia detailed as-built drawings, to hold a community meeting for ideas for long-term use of the building, and to estimate the cost of basic preservation. Long-term use will most likely be residential, with other income possibilities. Friends of Eliestoun conducted an art contest for a logo that was won by Brad Cornelius of Deerfield, Illinois. The board will be expanding, and a local advisory group will be

convening.

Friends of Eliestoun has met milestone #3 in their agreement with The Principia. This included space-use diagrams for each floor of Eliestoun, demonstrating an arrangement of residential suites on the second and third floors with a design accommodating an assembly space on the first floor.

Purchase a poster of the new logo and obtain more information at:

<http://www.friendsofeliestoun.org>

## RIVERWORKPROJECT



The above image is from a RIVERWORK-PROJECT textile panel. The curator of this work is Elsah resident, Sun Smith Foret. The idea for the piece came from the work of Libby Reuter, sculptor, and Josh Rowan, a photographer who references water issues in our region and globally. The textile represents the idea of the "River" especially the Mississippi and its tributaries. Various Elsah residents have contributed panels and fabric. Two large panels are by former mayor Marjorie Doerr. Richard Sparks (the same person whose article is in this issue) has also been an advisor on the project. The image above is copyrighted and has been used with permission for a one time basis in this newsletter without a fee.

RIVERWORK depicts the river in acrylic

painted cloth; squares and panels laid out like currents flowing. Themes include migration, Black and European, Asian and Hispanic, Native American. Artists who contributed considered agriculture, especially cotton, European settlement, Freeman and Freewoman settlement, the slave trade, underground railway, cities, floods, crossings, bridges, ferries, barge commerce, hydroelectric, advancing technologies, fish and wildlife, plant life and the colors of the seasons on the river. Each person has expressed their personal association with the river, or pure abstraction; dreams, memories, and reflections are both subjects and inspirations.

Since June 2015, panels have been exhibited on a rotating basis at The Jacoby Art Center, Alton Illinois. The full piece will be on view at Saint Louis Artists' Guild, Clayton, Missouri from April 22 to May 12, 2016.

### In Memory of June Cronin (1926- 2015)

June Cronin, a long time Village resident, active in civic affairs, died, peacefully and surrounded by her loving family on September 15, 2015. The memories and her gift of an example of "a good life, well lived" continue in our community and with her family.

I had the privilege of working with June Cronin in the Elsah community affairs. She always seemed unruffled by circumstances. She was a clear thinker and always interested in the activities of Elsah. She did not hesitate to express her views, but was always gracious. We were grateful for her service to the Village and when, her children were young, to the local school activities.

June was fully occupied with her family, community, and employment when her children were at home. So, when she was "retired," she pursued art. She was a gifted artist who

brought energy to her paintings. She enjoyed growing as an artist and participated in the Elsah Watercolor Society. With her permission, the Village of Elsah Museum has used her painting of the Village Hall as a logo.



June Cronin, image provided by Terri Darr

Even in her "advanced years" she was alert and had a good memory. When I was asked by a Reingtes relative about the relation of the Reingtes family to June Cronin, I went to visit with June for information. I enjoyed the opportunity for another Elsah history lesson from her about her mother, Violet Rister (1904-1970).

Marjorie Doerr, former mayor, shared these additional favorite memories of June: "Her afternoon gatherings once in a while with her smallest grandchildren, her love of her yard and always willing to share a slip of one plant or another, her love for Bob, her easy going way and patience for all, and all those kids who greatly loved both their parents."

She will be greatly missed in the Village. We are grateful that the family home remains in the Cronin family with Tom Cronin now living there.

Terri Darr, a daughter of Bob and June Cronin, serves on the Historic Elsah Foundation Board. Her work for the Village, like her family's, is deeply appreciated.

From the Crawford Funeral Home website:

*JUNE CRONIN ELSAH—June Mary Cronin, 89, died at 12:53 p.m., Wednesday, September 16, 2015 at Integrity Health Care of Godfrey.*

*She was born in Elsah on June 21, 1926, and was the daughter of the late William & Violet M. (Mandorcia) Rister. June graduated from Alton Senior High School, and attended the St. Joseph School of Nursing in Alton. She worked in pediatrics at St. Joseph's Hospital in Alton for many years, and was a longtime member of St. Michael's Catholic Church in Beltrees, and currently a member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Grafton. She married Robert Matthew Cronin on Nov. 5, 1947 at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Beltrees, and the two were blessed with nine children and 66 years of marriage before his death on March 21, 2014. Surviving are her children & their spouses, Rose Mary & James Towey of Godfrey, Mike & Jennifer Cronin of Port Townsend, WA, Dan & Dorothy Cronin of Elsah, Christine & Gordon White of Jacksonville, Terri & Mark Darr of Godfrey, John & Jennifer Cronin of Jerseyville, Dave & Rhonda Cronin of Dow, Fred Cronin of Godfrey, and Tom Cronin of Elsah; 19 grandchildren; nine great grandchildren; two brothers & sisters in law, William & Dorothy Rister of Alton, and Noel "Butch" & Darlene Rister of Alton; a sister & brother-in-law, Charlotte & Gene Dershewitz of Turner, Oregon. In addition to her parents and husband, she was preceded in death by a brother, Joseph Rister; and a sister, Clara Belle Kennedy. Visitation will be from 4 to 8 p.m., Tuesday at the Crawford Funeral Home in Jerseyville. A Mass of Christian Burial will take place at 11 a.m., Wednesday at the St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Grafton, with Father Patrick Gibbons officiating. Burial will be in Elsah Cemetery. Memorials may be given to the Historic Elsah Foundation or to the St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Grafton.*

Historic Elsah Foundation is grateful to report that many donations of have been received in June's memory. The following is a list of the donor names as of March 1, 2016. We thank the donors and June's family for designating Historic Elsah Foundation in this way. These donations will continue to be recognized

as part of our current capital campaign on our wall of honor in Farley's Music Hall.

Alton Unit Community School District No. 11  
Gretchen and Roger Batz  
Jane and Todd Becker  
Pam and James Crotchett  
Diane and Kevin Crowder  
Sheila and James Darr  
Terri and Mark Darr  
Melissa June Dershewitz  
Diane and Dan Droege  
Sue and Jon Freeman  
Linda and Kevin Heitzig  
Betty Hopkins  
Mary Jane Isringhausen  
John Kennedy  
Doris Langin and Friends at Federal Steel  
Inge Mack  
Judy and Randy Margeson  
Ann and Miles McLaughlin  
Mary and Robert Nickell  
Jane and David Pfeifer  
Jo Ann Phelps  
Women of First Presbyterian Church, Hardin  
Bridget and Kenneth Rahe  
Cyndy and Stephen Rice  
Darlene and Noel Rister  
Cynthia and Eddie Settles  
Donna and Edward Sheley  
Pamela Shroud and Family  
Pam and Mike Stumpf  
Rose and Tim Tomlinson  
Vicky and Ernest Trask  
Deborah Vanderberg  
Kristy and Patrick Varble  
Debbie and James Vonnahmen  
Cathy and Matt Williams

# Underwriters for 2015-2016

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Principia College



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*“...the preservation and enhancement of the historic buildings, architecture and culture of the Village of Elsah, Illinois, and the establishment of an education program to inform the general public of the historical and the educational values of the Village.”*